(b) and (c) As per available information, 28 Indian fishermen, 882 civilian prisoners and 54 missing defence personnel are believed to be in Pakistan's custody.

From time to time Pakistan provides consular access to some of the prisoners. During 2003, consular access was provided to 24 Indian civilians and 335 fishermen. Government, through diplomatic channels, is continuously taking up the issue of release of Indian civilians who were provided consular access and whose national status has been verified.

During the year 2003, India granted consular access to 84 Pakistani civilian prisoners and 23 apprehended fishermen. Consular access to 77 more Pakistani fishermen is being granted on December 11, 2003.

(d) and (e) As per available information, 109 Pakistani nationals are facing trial in various courts in India. They can be released after completion of due procedure.

Indian Missions and Consulates abroad

1035. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian diplomatic Missions and Consular Posts in foreign countries as on the 1st April, 2003;

(b) the number of Missions which consists of the Head of Mission supported by one attache with diplomatic status and a few non-diplomatic staff with their place of location;

(c) the names of the countries where India has resident Mission but which do not Maintain resident mission in India and *vice-versa;*

(d) whether the Expenditure Reforms Commission has recommended closure of some of resident missions and their substitution, if necessary, by concurrent accreditation; and

(e) if so, the names of the countries and location of such Missions and Government's decision in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The number of Indian

diplomatic Missions and Consular Posts in foreign countries as on 1st April, 2003 is 161.

(b) The number of Indian diplomatic Missions which consists of the Head of Missions, supported by one Attache with diplomatic status, and a few non-diplomatic staff with their place of location is nil.

(c) The names of countries where India has resident Missions but which do not maintain resident Missions in India are Azerbaijan, Botswana, Cote D' Ivorie (Ivory Coast), Fiji, Guyana, Jamaica, Madagascar, Maldives, Papua New Guinea and Seychelles. The names of countries which have resident Missions in India but where does not maintain resident Missions are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Congo (Democratic Republic), Holy See, Luxemburg, Rwanda, Solvenia, Somalia and Uruguay.

(d) to (e) The Expenditure Reforms Commissions in its report on the Ministry of External Affairs suggested that seven Missions namely Gaborone (Botswana), Ougadougou (Burkina Faso), Kingston (Jamaica), Velletta (Malta), Papua New Guinea (Port Moresby), Mahe (Seychelles) and Lima (Peru) could be considered for closure.

Two Indian resident Missions in Malta and Burkina Faso have since been closed down. There are no immediate proposals for closure of the remaining five Indian Missions abroad. However, the Ministry continues its efforts to constantly review functioning of its Missions/ Posts, and their continued relevance, and takes appropriate steps keeping in mind the political and economic ramifications of such decisions.

Inter-continental railway network

1036. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the answer to Starred Question 263 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 7th August, 2003 and state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister during his visit to Turkey and other European countries in September last made suggestion for having inter-continental railway networks connecting Southern China to London;

(b) if so, the names of the countries which have shown interests in